

Michael Brisbois House,
Prairie du Chien, Wis.

Crawford Co.

HABS No. 28-18.

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Photographs
Written Historical and Descriptive Data.
District No. 28.

Historic American Buildings Survey.
Alexander C. Guth, District Officer.
1249 N. Franklin Place, Milwaukee, Wis.

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12-PRACH

MICHAEL BRISBOIS HOUSE
Prairie du Chien, Crawford County
Wisconsin

Owner: Descendants of original owner.

Date of Erection: 1815.

Architect and Builder: No record.

Present Condition: Good.

Number of Stories: Two, and cellar.

Materials of Construction: Stone.

Other Existing Records: See text.

Additional Data: See following pages.

MICHAEL BRISBOIS HOUSE

In 1782 Michael Brisbois came to Prairie du Chien and established himself as a fur trader. He was associated with the Astor Fur Trading Company. Near to the Astor fur trading post he erected a house which is the subject of this sketch. ~~It~~ was built in 1815 ~~and~~ is located on an island, facing the east channel of the Mississippi River, which is formed by a sluice known as Marais de St. Feriole.

It is interesting to recall that Michael Brisbois held a commission and wore the uniform of the British Army. The Army post at Prairie du Chien was called Fort Crawford. Brisbois was one of the officers and at one time was charged with treason and sent under guard to St. Louis by the U. S. government. During his absence his wife was ordered from the house and it was taken over for the use of the U. S. officers.

This interesting old stone house has been occupied all these years by descendants of Michael Brisbois and has been kept in a good condition. A number of minor additions have been ~~made~~ to it. The cornice treatment is of a later date. This appears to be out of step with the rest of the structure. It has been learned, but not from a very authentic source, that the gable treatments at each end of the building were stepped ~~off~~.

The porch at the main entrance is new and ~~rather~~ shields the beautiful doorway. As the drawings indicate, this doorway is an outstanding piece of work. Its multi-panelled door is as unusual as any that has been found. It resembles closely the eastern colonial work.

This house, termed a mansion when it was built, is constructed of a local variety of gray limestone of a buff cast. On the front the stone is coursed regularly and on the sides and rear it is laid in an irregular fashion. All mortar and plaster was made of lime burned from clam shells taken from the nearby Mississippi River.

On the interior the window jambs are noteworthy especially the ones with the cabinets below. The inside doors are unusual in design. The hardware is all hand-wrought and of interesting design.

Besides the additions noted, ~~before~~ the house has been little changed. The whole structure still shows plainly the original character ~~itself~~.

Shuman C. Butch
District Officer.

Revised 1936, H.C.F.